

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Meeting  
September 17, 2014 at 7:00 pm  
Department of Recreation and Parks Headquarters  
Conference Room #1  
7120 Oakland Mills Road  
Columbia, MD 21046

Members Present:

Dr. Joel Goodman, Chair; JoAnne Kiebler; Charles Parvis; Sylvia Ramsey, Vice Chair; Bill Santos; Dan Tracy; Winnie Tsao.

Members Absent:

Thomas Franklin; Cindy Vaillancourt.

Staff Present:

John Byrd, Executive Secretary; John Marshall, Chief, Bureau of Parks and Program Services Division; Raul Delerme, Chief, Capital Projects and Park Planning Division; Laura Wetherald, Chief, Bureau of Recreation and Administrative Services; Anna Hunter, Marketing and Public Information; Seth Hoffman, Marketing Coordinator; and Barbara Anderson, Recording Secretary.

Dr. Goodman called the September meeting of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board to order at 7:00 pm.

Dr. Goodman welcomed new member Bill Santos to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. Mr. Santos will be serving as the Planning & Zoning Liaison.

Dr. Goodman also welcomed Winnie Tsao as the new Student Member of the Board.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Santos made a Motion to approve the minutes from the May 21<sup>st</sup> and the June 18<sup>th</sup> Advisory Board meetings.

Mr. Tracy seconded the Motion.

There being no further discussion, the Motion passed unanimously.

Correspondence:

Mr. Byrd reported that there were two pieces of correspondence to report.

He received correspondence from the Frederick County Government, Division of Parks and Recreation thanking the Department for hosting a retreat at Western Regional Park.

The Department also received a thank you from the Howard County Police Department for assisting them in a standoff situation with a suicidal subject. Park Rangers were able to accommodate residents living in the area by bringing the residents to the Natural Resource Division offices during the standoff.

Public Comments: None.

Director's Report:

Mr. Byrd reported that they did a park tour today with the Superlative Group. This Group has been hired for a sponsorship consulting project with the Department. Their first task is to evaluate the physical assets throughout the Department and place a value and feasibility analysis on whether that asset could be sold to a sponsor. A lot of analysis and research will need to be done in terms of County Code and Subtitle 19 which governs Recreation and Parks. The Group will also need to work with the Finance Office to determine if the property could be given a name brand depending on how it was purchased.

Mr. Byrd continued that it was not the Department's intention to sell the Park names outright. They are exploring the possibility of selling naming rights to a specific facility, gym or field. It's a fine line between an advertisement and a sponsor name. He is hopeful that they can sort through that and get some sizeable revenue from sponsorships.

That phase should be completed sometime around the holidays, and there will be a report from the Superlative Group that will then be shared with the Advisory Board. At that time there will be discussion as to moving forward into Phase II and hire the Superlative Group or another company to begin gathering sponsors.

Mr. Byrd reported that his staff had been reviewing the manual for the Recreation and Parks Board members. Each Advisory Board member should have received one when he or she became a member. Mr. Byrd asked if the manuals have been valuable or useful.

Mr. Byrd stated that the manual needs to be updated and could be distributed electronically if desired.

Mr. Byrd offered to take any members of the Board on a field trip one Saturday to see some of the new facilities and projects throughout the County.

Bureau of Parks and Program Services:

Mr. Marshall distributed an invitation for the annual Celebration of Partners in Parks to all of the Board Members. The Celebration will be held at Belmont on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. This year's itinerary is somewhat different from last year, and he hopes everyone can come.

"Off the Walls" is an art project currently in place at some of the county parks in conjunction with the Walter's Art Gallery. The Walter's has taken reproductions of famous paintings and installed them at four County sites – Robinson Nature Center, North Laurel Community Center, Roger Carter Community Center and Centennial Park.

Ms. Ramsey asked how the Department got involved with that program.

Mr. Marshall responded that the Walter's Art Gallery approached the County through the Arts Council. The Department had previously worked with and continues to participate in the Sculpture in the Park Program.

Mr. Marshall reported that the walks and runs that the Department does with all the different charities are going very well. They will be evaluating the events again this month. He reminded the Board that the Department is not accepting any new walks or runs until the impact of the existing events on the parks can be fully evaluated.



The County Executive launched the "Tell HoCo" app on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. This app is to be used by residents to report non-emergency maintenance issues to the County. The Parks Bureau was instrumental in developing and doing the beta testing of the new app.

Ms. Ramsey asked if each Department within County Government has an appointed representative to deal with the issues.

Mr. Marshall answered that there are two people, including himself, currently dealing with the app. The County is hoping to expand it to the other Departments after a period of time. His biggest concern is that residents may try to use the app for emergency-type events.

Mr. Marshall reported that construction of the Nature Space continues at the Robinson Nature Center. The new pavilion and Annie's Garden both look great. There will be an Open House at Robinson Nature Center on September 21<sup>st</sup> from 12 to 5.

Staff has been working very hard trying to get Belmont finished and ready for full operation.

Dr. Goodman asked how the new regulations governing the walks and runs have been received.

Mr. Marshall responded that the new procedures have been well received by the event organizers, and they understand that the Department needs to recover costs associated with the events. There is still a learning curve as to the licensing agreement. Mike Milani and Ella Carter are doing a great job sitting down with the groups to work out the logistics.

Bureau of Capital Projects, Park Planning and Construction:

Mr. Delorme reported that the first floor of Belmont is essentially completed. Work moves to the second floor. He is hoping to have the house opened up by mid-November. The caterer's kitchen is currently in design and will not be complete until late winter or early spring. The entire house should be finished by April. The grounds should be complete by then as well.

Mr. Marshall added that every Saturday through November 2015 has been booked. The season at Belmont runs from April through November.

Dr. Goodman asked if there were any unusual uses booked for the Manor House.

Mr. Marshall responded that he is anticipating a few but there are none yet.

Mr. Delorme reported that Phase II of Blandair Park is going out to bid this Friday. Phase II will include 2 synthetic turf baseball fields, 5 tennis courts, a playground, and restrooms. Construction will begin in January or February. Oakland Mills Road will have detours in place during construction and will eventually be tied into Route 175.

Ms. Ramsey asked when the bridge construction is planned.

Mr. Delorme responded that the bridge is currently being designed. Funding for the project may come in FY16. If the funding remains in the budget, construction could begin in a year and will take one to two years to complete.

Blandair Phase III is currently in the design and development phase. Phase III will include the Maintenance Shop, universal playground, bocce ball courts, croquet courts, horseshoe pits, pavilion and restrooms. Phase III is scheduled to go out to bid in the spring.

Blandair Phase VI is the multipurpose building similar to the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex and will include 4 basketball courts, an open air gym, badminton and volleyball, a skateboard park, exterior basketball courts, a Ranger's office, and a police substation. Funding will be requested in FY16.

Ms. Wetherald added that the courtyard of the new multipurpose building will be designed as a place for teens to hang out.

Mr. Delorme reported that all Board members will receive an invitation to the ribbon cutting on September 27<sup>th</sup> at Troy Park. The first two synthetic turf fields on site will be opened. There will also be a football game that morning after the ribbon cutting.



Phase II construction at Troy will begin within the next month or so following the ribbon cutting. This Phase will include 2 additional synthetic turf fields. One of these fields will be designated as a stadium field with a capacity of 1200 to 1500. Lights will be installed on the field that would allow for televised games, and the home side bleachers will be covered. The stadium will eventually tie into the planned community center and track.

Mr. Tracy asked when the community center is planned.

Mr. Delorme responded that he is asking for funding in the FY16 budget cycle.

Mr. Delorme reported that the restroom facility at Alpha Ridge Park is nearly complete. The Department is working with the astronomy group on the observatory. The licensing agreement could be complete tomorrow. Construction on the observatory will begin at the end of September or beginning of October.

Dr. Goodman added that a public event at the observatory will be planned for the spring.

Mr. Delorme reported that a ribbon cutting for South Branch Park in Sykesville was held on September 6<sup>th</sup> and was very well attended by the community and elected officials. A pavilion and playground was opened as part of Phase I of this project.

Ms. Hunter added that Seth Hoffman posted a video of the event on social media. The video can be found on the Howard County Government YouTube site.

Mr. Delorme continued that a charette will be held in October regarding the planned Skate Park at South Branch.

Mr. Delorme reported that the Department just completed its third year of installing synthetic turf fields at the county high schools. The last four fields are planned for next summer and include Glenelg, Centennial, Mt. Hebron, and River Hill High Schools.

Mr. Tracy asked if Glenelg would be done.

Mr. Delorme responded that the County will be managing the installation of the new storm drain system. That project will begin on Monday and continue through the winter. The field at Glenelg will be started as soon as possible – next April or May.

Dr. Goodman asked if the Department is satisfied with the Joint Use Agreement.

Ms. Wetherald responded that the agreement went through its annual review about a week ago.

Mr. Delorme reported that the Department was approached by the Gray Rock community regarding construction of a pathway from Gray Rock to the Miller Library. He distributed an overhead plan of the proposed pathways. There could be a future public meeting here in front of the Board regarding the pathway.

Mr. Byrd asked if there was an HOA in this community.

Mr. Delorme responded that he believed there is an HOA in place. There are two spurs planned for the pathway system. One spur is made more complicated by the need to build the path over a stream. The other spur could be done right away. He could potentially be asking for funding in FY16.

Dr. Goodman asked if there would be environmental issues involved with an impervious pavement and a nearby stream.

Mr. Delorme responded that there would be no environmental issues on the path where there was no stream.

Mr. Tracy stated that it looked like the pathway would go between two yards.

Mr. Delorme responded that there is an open space access strip in that location.

Ms. Tsao asked if there was a reason why part of the pathway dips down.

Mr. Delorme responded that the dip is a switchback because of the grade of the pathway in that area.

Ms. Kiebler asked that if there was resistance from the residents on Valerie Court, and could the path access be moved to Lookout Court or Graceland Court.

Mr. Delorme responded in the affirmative. There are three possible spots for the path access.

Mr. Byrd added that they don't have a good feel for how the community feels about the project. He intends to vet the plan through the community HOA. If feedback is positive, the project will come to the Board.

Mr. Byrd added that there will be a ribbon cutting for the new pathway in Dunloggin connecting that community to Northfield.

Mr. Delorme reported that the consultant is moving forward with Brenda Belensky from the Natural Resources Division on the Benson Branch Park Trail project. The consultant may be at the October meeting to give the Board an update on that project.

Mr. Tracy asked about the status of the East Columbia Library fields.

Mr. Delorme responded that the project is in design.

Mr. Byrd updated the Board on the Heine property in Ellicott City. The property was donated to the County by the Historic Ellicott City Organization. There were restrictions on the deed that the property be used for public recreation. Part of the design for the Lot F project in Ellicott City incorporates this parcel into the parking lot expansion. The other end of the parking lot would be used for public recreation. The Department needed the HEC organization to release the restrictions. Mr. Byrd heard today that the restrictions have been lifted so the project can move forward. He anticipates being able to host concerts and other public events at the corner near the Thomas Isaac Log Cabin.

Mr. Byrd also reported that Fort-Heine (aka "Granite Manor"), currently owned by the County, may become part of Recreation and Parks as another historic



property. It's a unique opportunity to have a house close to Main Street in historic Ellicott City. One idea is to convert the house into a Heritage Center where staff could have permanent offices close to the historic parts of Ellicott City. There is currently no funding to renovate the house, but it could be stabilized and the money budgeted over the next couple of years.

Mr. Tracy asked about the status of covered playgrounds.

Mr. Delorme responded that many of the new playgrounds will include canopies. Canopies are fabric and will be taken down during the cold weather months.

Mr. Byrd added that the Department did not get funding from bond bills to add sunshades to existing playgrounds. However, money was set aside from surplus funds to be put into the Health Department to help pay for the sunshades. He will be following up on that.

Bureau of Recreation and Administrative Service:

Ms. Wetherald reported that offices are currently being moved around to accommodate the installation of new carpeting as well as new security procedures at Headquarters.

County and Department Awards were held last week. Three staff members or teams received County level awards. The Customer Service Award went to Emily David who works at the Robinson Nature Center as an Administrative Support Tech. The Leadership Award went to Katie Peet also from the Robinson Nature Center. The Green Initiative Award went to the Department's Sustainability Team. Internal Awards were also given out. This year there were 30 to 40 staff members or teams nominated for internal awards.

Ms. Wetherald reminded the Board that as they look through the NRPA Magazine, they should be mindful of the three pillars as the Department moves forward with comprehensive planning. These three pillars are Conservation, Health & Wellness and Social Equity and reflect national trends.

Ms. Wetherald reported that they have just received the business plans for the Bureau of Recreation facilities.

Ms. Wetherald reported that there have been many training sessions done in-house for the Department. There was a recent training opportunity held at Robinson Nature Center by LERN (Learning Education Resource Network) and covered Marketing and Recreation and Parks trends. There were over 45 Department staff members there as well as individuals from the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association for a total of 75 people in attendance.

Trends that are affecting Recreation and Parks include:

- Rising Technology Breakthroughs: By 2020, there will be 50 billion connected devices, and each individual could have up to 6 devices.
- Climate Environmental Change: The world would need to produce 40% more water, 50% more energy, and 35% more food just to keep up with the population growth. Fuel prices will rise and people will want their services at home or within walking distance.
- Demographic Shifts: It's widely predicted that the US will become a minority/majority nation by 2043. Within a few years of that, the US will have the highest percentage of population over the age of 70 and under the age of 5.
- Accelerating Urbanization: In 2008, half of the population lived in urban areas. By 2050, up to 80% of the US population is predicted to live in urban areas.

Ms. Wetherald reported that Kiwanis Wallas is opening back up following some renovations. The facility is primarily used as a Recreation Licensed Child Care training site and meeting site. It is also used for Bridge Clubs and Knitting Club. Because of the parking situation, it is not an ideal location for ongoing programs.

Ms. Wetherald reported that over the past year, 22 staff positions became available. Only 4 of those positions were filled from outside of the Department.

Ms. Wetherald stated that the Thomas Viaduct Middle School opened up this year. The Recreation and Parks Activity Room located in the school is probably one of the prettiest ones out of all the eleven to twelve schools that have Activity Rooms. The Department offers a Can-Teen program in that Activity Room as well as daily Preschool learning programs that encourage social interaction and Department and Community meetings.



Ms. Wetherald reported that the Howard County Department of Technology and Communication is assisting Recreation and Parks with software that will allow multiple Departments to have access to the volunteer database.

Ms. Wetherald stated that she and Mr. Delorme met with representatives from the Board of Education regarding possible renovations to Wilde Lake Middle School. The Department was interested in incorporating an Activity Room into the middle school renovation plans. However, they were told that the middle school was only one of twelve schools in the nation that is considered “zero sustainability.” It would not be much more expensive to build a brand new school than it would be to renovate the existing school; therefore, the school will not be renovated.

Dr. Goodman commented that the National Recreation and Parks Association Magazine is an excellent magazine and recommended that the Board members take a look.

Dr. Goodman also commented on the article written about the “Shred It” video created by the Marketing Division.

Ms. Hunter stated that the video has been very well received and they will be doing more videos next year.

#### Old Business:

Mr. Byrd stated that, over the summer, there had been a slight surge in interest regarding roller hockey at Alpha Ridge. The Target Archery is in place at Alpha Ridge now and programming has begun. The larger roller hockey rink will remain open.

Mr. Byrd updated the Board on the Garden Plots in North Laurel. He stated that the Department has not had time to do much serious reconnaissance on where to locate the plots. They have looked for locations sporadically over the past few years, and there were no locations that jumped out at him as a real feasible place with infrastructure options for parking, water, and composting. However, they will continue to look for a suitable location.



Mr. Santos added that the Community Garden on the east side of Columbia is part of a BGE right of way. There is a large substation near North Laurel off of Leishear Road.

Mr. Byrd responded that he has had conversations with Mike Fowler from BGE regarding the use of BGE land for additional Garden Plots. BGE is open to the idea, but use will come down to the feasibility of parking and water access. It will probably cost the Department a couple hundred thousand dollars to build a Community Garden site.

Mr. Byrd added that they will also need to find an organization that is willing to manage the plots. The Columbia Gardeners manage all of the Columbia sites, but they do not want to go to Laurel.

Mr. Delorme stated that the Department is currently adding new compost bins and ADA raised beds to the garden at Lake Elkhorn.

#### New Business:

Dr. Goodman stated that he is involved in the County with astronomy education and outreach. By coincidence he struck up a conversation with the Director of the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab during a delay in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks display. Dr. Goodman commented to him that he did not think enough was being done to inspire younger children regarding STEM, and that the JHU APL as the largest private sector employer could be doing more in the schools.

Dr. Goodman met with the Director of the STEM Education Outreach Office as well as the Chief Scientist of APL. He suggested to them that there should be increased conversation and potentially a partnership between APL and Recreation and Parks. APL was very open to the idea.

Dr. Goodman made a Motion for the Board to support an initiative to open up conversation and possibly form a community partnership between the STEM Office at APL and the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Mr. Santos seconded the Motion.

Ms. Tsao asked what kind of programs Dr. Goodman would try to implement.

Dr. Goodman answered that, for example, APL is the designer of the New Horizons Mission that is arriving at Pluto next year. He would like to see that all county school children and their parents know next year about New Horizons. Not just that it is a cool thing that a local employer is running, but how that instills a sense of wonder. Studies show that the best time to get kids interested in STEM is between the ages of 7 and 10.

Dr. Goodman is hoping to have a meeting with the Space EPO office at APL to get information about their planned Pluto Palooza for next year. He would like to see that incorporated in the schools and would like Recreation and Parks take the lead on getting programs implemented in the way of after school programs, events hosted at APL, etc.

There being no further discussion, the Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Santos asked what the Lab's capabilities were beyond the obvious astronomy tie-in.

Ms. Wetherald responded that she felt the credibility of the Lab to just open up the doors to the educational possibilities has not really been explored before.

Dr. Goodman added that many times APL employees go out to speak in schools, but it's on their own time and is not sponsored by APL.

Mr. Santos suggested that some sort of STEM function be worked into ribbon cuttings, i.e., the physics of skate boarding.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Santos made a Motion to adjourn.

Ms. Kiebler seconded the motion.

Dr. Goodman adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm.



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Dr. Joel Goodman, Chairman



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John Byrd, Executive Secretary